



**Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality**  
**OES - Air Permits Division, Manufacturing Section**  
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# **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ASBESTOS**

## **A Homeowner's Guide**

### **What is Asbestos?**

Asbestos, once known as the "miracle mineral," is the name of a group of naturally occurring minerals. These minerals separate into very long, thin, durable fibers, which make its use very attractive for industrial use. This mineral can be found in many different forms throughout Canada, Russia, South Africa, and in the United States. The three most commonly used forms in commercial applications are *chrysotile* (white asbestos), *amosite* (brown asbestos), and *crocidolite* (blue asbestos). Asbestos is known for its insulating properties, soundproofing, anti-corrosiveness, condensation control, its strength enhancing properties, and resistance to heat and fire.

### **Where can Asbestos be Found?**

Asbestos can be found in most homes built or remodeled prior to 1979. Asbestos-containing building materials (ACBM) may vary between 1% and 100% in asbestos content. There are approximately 3600 asbestos containing products. Some of the most common ones found in homes are listed below:

- Vinyl-asbestos floor tiles and asbestos backed linoleum, resilient floor covering and mastics
- Asbestos-Cement Roofing and Siding Shingles
- Sprayed-on ceilings between 1945 and 1978 ("popcorn")
- Wall and ceiling joint compounds before 1977
- Insulation on boilers and water heaters, pad under furnace
- Textured paints before 1978
- Roofing felts and tars
- Pipe insulation between 1920 and 1972 (can be preformed insulation, paper wrap, tape or plaster)
- Asbestos insulated wiring
- Fuse box liners and stove door gaskets
- Artificial fireplace ashes and logs before 1977

### **Does Asbestos Pose Any Health Threats to My Family?**

Homeowners should be very careful not to disturb Asbestos-containing material (ACM) when renovating or doing repairs. When ACM is crushed or pulverized, asbestos fibers are released into the air. Asbestos fibers can remain suspended in the air for extended periods of time, increasing the risk of inhalation. Once these fibers are inside the body, they remain there for years, perhaps leading to asbestos-related diseases such as asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma. Studies indicate that by far the majority of individuals with asbestos-related diseases have been people in the business of manufacturing, installing and removing asbestos products. People exposed to small amounts of asbestos may not develop any related health problems, however, there is no "safe" level known; therefore, exposure to friable asbestos should be avoided.

## **How Can I Reduce the Risk of Exposure in My Home?**

Under most circumstances asbestos in good condition should be left alone. ACM that is not crumbly or damaged poses little or no risk. LDEQ does not regulate asbestos in the home, however, if you as a homeowner must remove ACM, LDEQ recommends that you research best management practices such as containment and adequate wetting to reduce exposure to you and your family. We recommend that you obtain and review materials on handling asbestos. Some of these materials are located at <http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/ashome.html#4>. By sufficiently wetting these materials and keeping them wet during all demolition and handling activities, the homeowner can reduce the possibility of creating a fiber release episode. In addition, such materials should not be crushed, pulverized, abraded, grinded or sawed. You may also consult the Occupational Safety and Health Administration web site, guidelines for Personal Protective Equipment at <http://www.osha.gov>.

You may also use a licensed asbestos abatement contractor and insist they use emission control procedures. Contractors performing abatement must be licensed by the Louisiana State Licensing Board for Contractors. Licensing for asbestos abatement is under the commercial license with a specialty in asbestos. Additional information for licensing can be found at <http://www.lslbc.louisiana.gov/index.asp> or by calling (225) 765-2301.

If you are uncertain whether or not your home contains asbestos-containing materials, a small bulk sample may be wetted, placed in a double zip locked plastic freezer bag and submitted for analysis to an environmental laboratory. You may also contact one of the accredited asbestos inspectors from the list on the LDEQ web site at <http://www.deq.louisiana.gov>. These inspectors are trained to identify ACM through visual inspection and sampling techniques.

## **How Do I Dispose of the Asbestos?**

Asbestos in single family dwellings do not fall under state regulations covering asbestos removal and disposal. Methods for disposal should comply with local rules governing waste removal. A list of Louisiana recognized Asbestos Landfills can be found on the LDEQ web site at <http://www.deq.louisiana.gov>

By obtaining knowledge about the ACM in your home, precautions can be taken to avoid exposure before disturbing the materials. You may also contact the LA Department of Environmental Quality at 225-219-3181 for other appropriate guidance measures to protect yourself from being exposed.